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'United Slaves': Tearing Down the 'American Dream' and Showing the Real American Nightmare

"America is the best country in the world only if you are rich": Helena Villar portrays in her book the underside of the American dream with the voice of her 'slaves'



RT Washington correspondent [Helena Villar](#) is the author of the essay entitled [United Slaves. The other side of the American Dream](#) (Akal, 2021), in which he explores "the bloody reality of capitalism", the fallacy of its success as a model and the potential danger of its export.



Villar portrays in his book the underside of the American dream with the voice of his 'slaves'. He argues that, effectively, *"America is the best country in the world only if you're rich."*

"This country is exceptional for many things, but not for the good, which is what I come to show in the book," says its author, who has spent several years covering the political, economic and social reality of a country supported by a system cunning enough to raise freedom without the shackles being noticed.

That in the U.S. the poor have to resort to antibiotics for fish because they cannot afford these medicines, that public education is in crisis because of a system that bets on its deterioration, that the sale of blood in disadvantaged neighborhoods is the option for the poorest, or that university students live in debt all their lives to pay for their degree, are some of the most striking strokes of this American portrait against the light.



One of the objectives of this book," Villar argues, "is to try to expose that this is the system that is intended to be exported to other rich nations. It is a warning of the bloody reality of capitalism and a warning to value the structures or foundations that still exist in other societies and that I think it is very important to defend, such as community, syndicalism and the sense of class".

A book where people come out

This essay – published last year by the [Akal publishing house](#) in a collection directed by Spanish journalist [Pascual Serrano](#) – has been built, in large part, during Villar's years as *RT*'s US correspondent. The contrast of numerous data, reports and statistics allowed him to have a look free of sweeteners and written by the voice of those who rarely appear on the covers of the hegemonic press.

That is why, when faced with the writing, the research work was sufficiently advanced so that the challenges before the page were different: "Deciding what counted and what did not to make a more or less complete x-ray and find a way to relate everything, that obsessed me," says Villar. The other thing was to insist on leaving people's voices.

"I was very clear that I wanted to put the voices of the 'slaves' because I am used to people being the protagonist, not me. This is supposed to be an essay, but Pascual didn't see it. However, I insisted that I wasn't going to write a book where people didn't come out."

Thus, for example, to the crude statistical account of the 43 million illiterate people that the US counted in 2013, Brittani Bellami's voice is added to tell how it was the day she realized that she could not read or write. Faced with the figure of 530,000 families declared bankrupt for not being able to pay health expenses, the testimony of volunteer doctor Colleen Madigan about a man who preferred to give up his prescription and use those extra 4 dollars of the new recipe to bring food to the table Helena Villar, RT correspondent and author of 'United Slaves'



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"I started with health because it was one of the things that impacted me the most about this country, but then I gave the example of an NGO that organized to give aid to developing countries and suddenly warned that they did not have to go anywhere." The developing country was just around the corner and not leaving any borders.

However, as the author rightly warns, this sum of daily tragedies and first-person testimonies about the rottenness of the system is not enough to understand on which pillars the ideal of export is sustained. The *"unfathomable and at the same time tremendously simple"* paradox of the US – as Villar writes – can only be explained by the power of the ideological apparatus.

"American exceptionalism is what elites raise to say that this country is built on a different foundation than the rest, and that makes it qualitatively superior. This premise serves not only to advance foreign imperialist propaganda, but internal propaganda. In the end, people end up actually believing that this is the best possible system, so they don't dispute that narrative to a point where it generates enormous individualism. And if this is the best system in the world and I'm doing badly, it's my fault."

In one of the episodes of the book, a homeless woman named Dolores, raped and attacked several times living on the street, puts her hope in the freedom of a place in the psychological help programs of some NGO. For her, the State does not exist even as a mere possibility.



In this regard, Villar argues: *"This is a country with high rates of propaganda and one of the examples I give in the book is the huge percentage of poor people who believe in the system and who, despite being in one of the worst situations or directly on the street, believe that their country is the best there is."*

The refuge from helplessness, for many, ends up being religion. *"The high rates of religiosity in this country do not occur in other advanced economies. In the book I also explain that this not only serves as a catalyst for discontent, but as a counterweight to an increasingly less existing state. What the church and the cults have done is create community in a country where there is no social and state cushion to provide for that. Faith saves them in their day to day and communities are established based on charity, which in the end in itself is a patch that perpetuates that inequality"*.

In the book, in fact, that same homeless woman says, *"Today I've been given HIV results and they're negative, so God is good, right? It doesn't matter what happens to me. He still takes care of me."* The national motto of *'In God we trust'* has never been so valid.



The homeless are increasing every day in Los Angeles, California.

"This is the most unequal country in the G7 and that's because there are two faces: there is the great working and exploited mass, and then there is that elite. Remember that the United States is the nation in the world with the most millionaires and that cannot be hidden, but at the same time it is the one that registers the greatest inequality between rich and advanced nations. For example, in the 60s this country was the one with the highest life expectancy on the planet and right now that is in retreat, almost at the same level as developing nations, and all this is explained by the effects of 'Reaganism', of tightening the screws on the working class so that there is less and less distribution and social justice. The trends are there and it's true that this is the best country on the planet if you're rich."



[Helena Villar](#), Spanish journalist, correspondent for rt in Washington.

Although the border between the 'a side' and the 'b-side' seems insurmountable and the validity of the American dream seems to become entrenched over time, Villar argues that there are obvious fissures, beyond the undeniable capacity that the system has to mutate and reinvent itself. The position of the political class, even the most conservative, is one such sign.

The 'American dream' is a construction that is known to the whole planet, because it is what has been exported. It is the face of the elite, but it is not the only one. The importance of the book itself is to show how the 'b-side' has been deteriorating more and more. If at one point this country could be the model for many reasons, today it is not so. However, it continues to be used as an example and continues to try to import the dynamics that are proving to be failed here. Joe Biden himself, who is one of the most conservative Democrats there has ever been, confirmed those levels of inequality and the need to restore what I would call 'the social contract', because the one right now is broken. The book attempts to explain that reality. Now, if there is a social contract, there are two parts, but I believe that as a medium, as a correspondent, with whom we must identify is with the great social mass, with the workers, not with the elite. Unless you work at the Wall Street Journal."

Another sign of cracking of the model can be noticed outside doors. In that line, the correspondent argues: *"In terms of geopolitics, China realized that one of the ways to open a fissure was to take that failure of capitalism – which seeks to obtain profits no matter at what price – to win the manufacturing game from the US. So that perversion of the system, which wants to achieve more by investing less and demoralizing its workers, ended up making its rival strong, so now this country is increasingly dependent on China."*

From sleep to mirage



Critical social phenomenon in the Californian city of Los Angeles: record number of homeless people.

"The American dream is becoming the American illusion." The phrase, quoted in the book, belongs to the United Nations special envoy to investigate poverty, Philip Alston, and summarizes the feeling that the reader has left at the end of the essay.

And it's not free. Throughout its pages it is evident the loss of benefits for the working class, increasingly precarious and exploited; the crippling economic and social inequality that oppresses black communities; the impasse for migrants stripped of their own humanity and called '*aliens*'; and the constant reinvention of a model that is increasingly indebted to finance weapons, but lowers taxes on large fortunes. Therefore, the natural thing is that a question jumps out: how close is the collapse?

"If I knew, I wouldn't write the book," Villar jokes. More than a task of prediction, his essay is an x-ray of the cracks and loopholes through which the drift of American capitalism could sneak in. "I want it to serve as a warning and that, when it comes to betting on certain models, we know exactly where we are going. Because everything, from the economic, social, taste, relationship system, is being tried to copy from the United States without knowing the reality. Especially based on propaganda, fiction or what we think this country is. We cannot continue to live on that 'American dream' that could have been in the 60s. It's basically that: a book for us to realize where we're going and think about whether it's really where we want to go."

Biden couldn't hurt a war

This is not an anti-American book. Its pages, full of incontrovertible data and realities, are also inhabited by the people who sustain the country, although it does not always thank them. *"Yes, there is a movement, there are people with enormous dignity. One of the things that strikes me about the U.S. is how in these conditions, there are still people who stand up, who fight and who create awareness, but I know that changing the system is very difficult."*

In fact, one of the dangers is that, in the face of internal unrest, the system resorts to the strategy of looking for external enemies. In that sense, Villar warns: *"Biden could not hurt a war at this time, that possibility has always been a historical constant: when empires internally have problems or no hope is seen indoors, what they do is throw balls out. And, as I explain in the book, we must not lose sight of the fact that the U.S. war machine is one of the pillars that the model struggles to sustain and the exit of the great poor masses of this country, who serve in the Army as cannon fodder to obtain all the social services of which the State deprives them. That is why, I insist, we are in a very dangerous moment."*

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